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ABSTRACT

The study sought to determine barriers that impede college of education faculty members' involvement in grant-related research activities. An initial questionnaire completed by 54 college of education faculty at a large public university was designed to determine faculty experience in applying for and/or obtaining external funding for research. Structured interviews were then conducted with 15 faculty members with a wide range of experience in working with grants. Although faculty members viewed grants activity as being important, many did not routinely pursue external funding due to the following impediments: (1) lack of time, (2) lack of information about funding sources, (3) lack of procedural information, (4) and lack of a clearly defined system of rewards for those who obtain external funding. A general lack of clarity as to the place of grantsmanship in the overall scheme of the college's expectations for faculty was a commonly expressed concern. Faculty also expressed the need for technical assistance and assistance in the physical preparation of proposals. Recommendations include college establishment of a clearly defined reward system for those involved in grantsmanship activities, release time for faculty to pursue grants, and administrative support for the grant writing and implementation process. 14 references. (DB)

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BARRIERS TO FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN GRANT-RELATED ACTIVITIES

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Little Rock, AR, November 8-10, 1989.

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ABSTRACT

Opportunities for funded research serve as a major incentive for scholarly productivity among college and university faculty members. Yet, considering the number of activities which compete for faculty members' time, grant-related activities are frequently neglected. The present study sought to determine some of the barriers that impede college of education faculty members' involvement in grant activities. Data were collected via structured interviews with selected college of education faculty members at a large public university.

Three major impediments to funded research activities were identified--lack of procedural information, lack of information about funding sources, and lack of a clearly-defined system of rewards for those who obtain external funding. Other impediments were also identified. Based upon these findings, a number of recommendations are offered for improving faculty involvement in grant-related activities.

BARRIERS TO FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN GRANT-RELATED ACTIVITIES

The idea of the university faculty member's role including both teaching and research has its roots in the sixteenth century German university model (Merriam, 1986). Since that time, both teaching and research have had important roles in the history of academia. Although teaching has historically remained at the forefront of American higher education, by the late nineteenth century, research had begun to emerge as an integral part of the American university's mission (Geiger, 1986). The role of research has continued to become increasingly important during the second half of the twentieth century, to the extent "that [today's] universities judge themselves, and are judged by others, on the basis of their research productivity" (Fulton & Trow, 1974, p. 30).

The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1980) predicted that in the last two decades of the twentieth century, higher education would experience a "new academic revolution" characterized by a decrease in funding coupled with an increase in student enrollment. Bowen and Schuster (1985) predicted that during that same time academia would fail to attract new young research-oriented faculty, and would, in fact, experience a loss of four percent of its faculty per year. Consequently, the role of funded research in American universities is projected to become increasingly important, even though there will be fewer faculty members qualified to do such research.

In light of these facts, one speech communication scholar remarked that "increased attention to extramural [financial] support for our scholarship is necessary, if not sufficient, for communication to prosper in the immediate future" (Burgoon, 1988, p. 252). Obviously, the future prosperity of other disciplines hangs in the balance as well. Even "teaching" universities are feeling the pressure to become more research-oriented (Churchman & Hellweg, 1981; Mishler, 1987). Moreover, Knodt (1985) reports that research and publishing have become an important part of academic reality in two-year institutions as well.

As previously noted, the increasing importance being placed on higher educational research is related to the escalating costs of higher education in the face of internal economic pressures. Emphasis upon faculty involvement in research activities is frequently coupled with institutions' goal of increasing external funding. In fact, research has become an important source of income, with institutions of the 1980's receiving approximately 13 percent of their revenues from grants and contracts (Brinkman & Leslie, 1985).

Many faculty members are finding themselves in an environment where they are expected to conduct research and to actively pursue external funding for their research activities (Fulton & Trow, 1974). Unfortunately many faculty members have received little or no training in grantsmanship. Also, many feel strong tensions between their obligations as teachers and as researchers (Burgoon, 1988; Merriam, 1986). Others refrain from

pursuing grants because the process is too risky and results in too few if any financial or intrinsic rewards. Consequently, some institutional administrators have begun to realize that they have failed to keep pace with needed support mechanisms for grants procurement, and have recognized the need to revise faculty reward structures to reflect these new professional demands. Many institutions are now initiating programs to enhance research capabilities and to increase faculty involvement in pursuing sponsored funding (Mishler, 1987).

Despite this lack of involvement in grantsmanship, Cook and Loadman (1984) report that there is a high degree of consensus among faculty members with varying degrees of grantsmanship experience as to perceived "truths" associated with the grants process. In developing instrumentation to measure perceptions of what is important in the grantsmanship process, the researchers noted that there was a specific subset of their inventory items which subjects consistently endorsed as important. Items addressing knowledge of funding sources, clarity of the proposal, knowledge of budgetary procedures, and attention to submission deadlines were included in this subset (Cook & Loadman, 1984).

In addition to this common perception of the "truths" of the grantsmanship process, there are a number of commonly-recognized barriers to faculty members' getting involved in funded research programs. A number of barriers related to faculty involvement in grantsmanship have been identified: (a) lack of time necessary for engaging in the grant process (Boice, 1987; Knodt, 1988), (b)

heavy teaching loads (Churchman & Hellweg, 1981; Knodt, 1988), (c) insufficient knowledge of funding sources and proposal writing techniques (Burgoon, 1988; Churchman & Hellweg, 1981), (d) the likelihood of rejection after investing valuable hours in the project (Harris, 1985), (e) lack of contact with colleagues in other disciplinary areas who may be instrumental in grant procurement (Knodt, 1988), (f) concern that funding-driven research may result in "watered down" scholarship (Burgoon, 1988; Churchman & Hellweg, 1981), and (g) lack of adequate institutional library resources (Knodt, 1988).

Churchman and Hellweg (1981) contend that these and other barriers to obtaining grants originate with particular institutions on a unique basis, and that these barriers "can be attacked by corrective policies initiated by the staff and faculty of the [individual] college [or university] itself" (p. 108). These corrective policies might include such actions as assisting faculty in writing proposals, helping faculty locate funding sources, and granting faculty members release from teaching duties in order to pursue funded research opportunities (Churchman & Hellweg, 1981).

Considering the increasing importance of grantsmanship in American universities, the purpose of the present study was to identify barriers to the grantsmanship process among college of education faculty in a large public university in hopes of eventually improving the opportunity for successful external funding of faculty members' research. Selected college of

education faculty from a large public university comprised the sample. Much of the data collected for the present study was originally collected through the efforts of a college-appointed committee which was given the task of determining factors which negatively impacted upon the faculty's grant-related activities. This committee consisted of three faculty members serving on a voluntary basis and two part-time graduate research associates.

Methodology

Two phases of data collection were utilized to gather information from the selected faculty members on their involvement in grant activities: (a) an initial questionnaire to determine faculty experience in applying for and/or obtaining external funding for research or project development, and (b) a follow-up interview with selected faculty members to gain in-depth information on perceived problems which hamper faculty involvement in grantsmanship. The breakdown (by percentage) of the number of faculty members from each department who participated in each phase of the study is presented in Table 1.

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The initial questionnaire was distributed to all college of education faculty. Items appearing on this questionnaire are presented in Appendix A. Usable responses were returned by 54 individuals. These data were useful in the process of selecting faculty to participate in the follow-up interviews.

The sample selected to participate in follow-up interviews

(n = 15) were selected based on the following criteria:

(1) Experience in working with grants. An attempt was made to include faculty members across a wide range of experience.

(2) Departmental affiliation. Faculty members were selected from all four of the departments in the college.

(3) Availability of Faculty Members. The original list of interviewees included the names of 16 College of Education faculty members. The interviewers were unable to contact two interviewees during the two-week period allowed for this phase of the data collection. In addition, one additional faculty member was added to the original list of interviewees.

The interview protocol was developed by members of the grants and research committee, and consisted of twelve open-ended items. These items are presented in Appendix B. Four broad areas of interest were assessed during the interview, including (a) grantsmanship experience and related faculty needs, (b) physical preparation of proposals, (c) familiarity with institutions having model grant support programs, and (d) other concerns. Although an attempt was made to keep the interviews as brief as possible, actual interview times ranged from 15 minutes to one hour, with approximately 30 minutes as an average time.

FINDINGS

In general, it was found that most of the interviewed faculty members view grants activity as being important, yet many do not routinely pursue external funding due to lack of information about funding sources, constraints of time, lack of

knowledge of grant writing procedures, and the absence of a viable system of rewards for those involved in grant writing and project implementation. A general lack of clarity as to the place of grantsmanship in the overall scheme of the college's expectations for faculty was a commonly expressed concern. One faculty member felt that the college definitely expected faculty to pursue grants, but that the lack of administrative support given to the faculty resulted in "big league expectations in a little league system." Specific findings across the four major areas of interest assessed during the interviews will follow.

Grantsmanship Experience and Related Needs

As previously noted, faculty interviewees were at all points on the experience continuum, ranging from those who have had no previous experience in working with grants to those who have been successful at receiving funding for numerous projects. Chief among the perceived problems with faculty involvement in the grants process were time constraints, lack of reward for pursuing grants, lack of technical assistance, problems regarding administrative and budgetary items, and lack of information about funding sources and/or an apparent lack of funding sources for the type of research of interest to a particular faculty member.

Lack of time was a problem for almost all of the faculty members interviewed, with non-tenured faculty expressing a higher level of concern regarding time than tenured faculty. Among the activities most frequently cited as interfering with the time that might otherwise be spent pursuing external funding were

committee meetings and large teaching loads. Contrary to this prevailing sentiment, at least one veteran faculty member said that the current teaching schedules of most College of Education faculty allow sufficient time for involvement in grant writing. On the other hand, several interviewees stated that it was necessary to give up a large amount of their vacation time in order to find adequate time to work on grant proposals.

The one issue that seemed to affect all of the interviewed faculty regardless of their level of experience with grants was the lack of information about funding sources. When funding sources are made available, there is frequently the problem of an adequate amount of lead time from the receipt of the call for proposals and the proposal due date. A response typical of those expressing this concern was stated by one veteran faculty member who had had a lot of experience in working with grants: "Several times I have received a call for proposals when the due date is less than a week away. If the college would like for me to pursue these opportunities, they could at least see that I get the information far enough ahead of time that it is possible to have time to write the proposal."

One faculty member expressed concern over the way in which information that is received is packaged. He felt most faculty members were not oriented to reading "formal grant information," and felt that a "friendlier media" for sharing written information with faculty members would promote more faculty interest in grant activity. He also felt that this information

should be personally followed up by someone who could offer technical assistance to faculty members who are interested in writing grants but who feel uncomfortable pursuing the task alone due to a lack of technical knowledge.

In general, finding adequate funding sources was perceived as a time-consuming task. When asked to elaborate on this problem, one faculty member responded, "There are less labor-intensive things people can do to further their [professional] growth and development." She then went on to say that time normally spent doing professional reading and writing had to be sacrificed in order to search out funding sources. Another faculty member said that she felt many faculty members avoided involvement in grant writing because it is too risky. As she put it, "There is too much time wasted on turned-down grants."

Several faculty members commented that they had practically given up on the hope of finding any funding sources to support their research. Two such faculty members, for instance, said they do a lot of research, but do not routinely pursue funding sources because their research does not easily fit into the guidelines of the type of proposals called for by most external funding sources. One of these faculty members was critical of faculty who allow calls for proposals to generate their research agendas rather than pursuing areas in which they have genuine interest.

Absence of a clearly defined reward system for those involved in writing and obtaining funding for grant proposals was

another widespread concern. A number of faculty members suggested that grantsmanship be more closely tied to promotion and tenure decisions. This was particularly a concern of non-tenured faculty members, many of whom sincerely wanted to pursue grant opportunities, yet were concerned with basic professional survival issues. One faculty member commented, "I can write up a couple of articles that no one really cares about rather than devote the same amount of time to writing up a proposal which may have a greater impact on the university." Yet, he commented, when it comes time for promotion and tenure decisions, the department is much more concerned with faculty members' publication records than their ability to bring funding into the university.

A related concern was the lack of financial reward for those who participated in grant-related activities. Many interviewees felt that a lot of faculty members do not pursue grants because they can teach during the summer or take a course overload during the regular semesters and receive a larger financial reward for their efforts. One veteran faculty member labelled these increases in course loads as a "short-term" benefit to faculty which would eventually lead to faculty burnout.

Concern was also expressed that not enough of the indirect costs associated with funded proposals comes back to the PI or to the department sponsoring the grant. One faculty member responded, "Currently it seems that you're being punished if you do get grants." Another faculty member felt that a lack of

common knowledge about how the reward structure works leads to a lot of mistrust and feelings of ill will among the faculty within a department. For instance, a faculty member who receives funding for a grant proposal, and who is, as a result, given a reduction in course load, may be seen as doing less work than other faculty members.

Administrative support for faculty members involved in externally funded projects through such incentives as additional travel money, more needed equipment, and an increased number of graduate assistants was also mentioned. According to one interviewee, such a "kickback program" was at one time promised by the university administration, but, as he put it, "they have reneged."

Released time for faculty members who are successful at bringing funding into a department was viewed as another appropriate reward for those involved in externally funded projects. For example, when asked what type of incentives were needed to involve more faculty in pursuing grants, one faculty member responded, "Release time when dealing with competitive federal grants. We're competing with the big guys here." Several interviewees recommended the hiring of additional faculty members to allow for released time and/or reductions in teaching responsibilities. It was felt that the extra time that this would allow faculty members to devote to obtaining funding would produce enough income to pay for the additional faculty members' salaries.

Several of the interviewees felt that there was a shortage of faculty members in the college who are expert at grant writing and implementation. A number of the faculty members expressed concern that presently the college is unable to recruit people talented in these areas due to budgetary problems which prevent the offering of competitive salaries.

Lack of Technical Assistance

Among those faculty members who had not had a lot of experience with grants, a need for technical assistance was frequently expressed. One particular faculty member saw grants as necessary to the survival of the department, yet felt a need for guidance on the "how-to" of such things as getting a project funded. This faculty member stated: "If we don't get grants, I'm afraid they'll put three more people in my office and give us lights only on alternate Tuesdays." Yet, in the same breath she expressed a concern for the lack of information about how to pursue grants: "What door do you knock on? Who do you contact? What things cause proposals to be thrown out?" In short, as she put it, "I need an uncle."

Other faculty members expressed a desire to pursue grants, but due to a lack of success in their previous attempts, had become discouraged about their chances for success in obtaining funding. In several cases where this was the case, the interviewee cited the lack of political connections or the presence of competition within the department or elsewhere in the university as reasons for their proposals' failure. Several

faculty members felt there was a need for the college to develop coalitions with various funding agencies, local public school districts, and other grant-seeking institutions of higher education. Many suggested that a full-time "lobbyist" position be established to assist the faculty in grant procurement.

Several of the less experienced faculty mentioned that having an experienced person to review their proposals would be helpful. One faculty member who had been successful in obtaining funding recognized this need, and recommended that the college concentrate its efforts in helping faculty members who are working on their first proposal.

A number of problems regarding various administrative and budgetary items were cited by a number of the interviewees, especially by those who did have a great deal of experience in working with funded projects. The UNO budgetary management system was severely criticized. Faculty comments included: "Budget sheets are not informative. Categories don't match up [with actual budgetary categories]."; "Tracking this [information about project budgets] down takes a lot of valuable time."; and "It's hard to get this information on time. I'm afraid we're letting money go down the big black hole."

In general, those who were or had been principal investigators on one or more projects saw themselves as receiving little active "support from the top." When asked to elaborate on his comments regarding lack of administrative support, one interviewee responded, "It's a matter of [lack of] commitment by

the university. The PI's are doing it all alone." One faculty member complained that in many cases the university administration oversteps its boundaries of authority by getting involved in programmatic decisions rather than purely administrative matters. Problems associated with approval of the grant by the department chair or the university research office were also mentioned. At least one faculty member reported to have experienced the ultimate in lack of administrative support: "I had one grant that never even got submitted by the Research Office to the Department of Education."

Physical Preparation of Proposals

Boilerplate assistance was mentioned spontaneously by only one of the interviewees, although almost all of the interviewees agreed that such information would be helpful when brought up by the interviewers. One interviewee mentioned that it would be beneficial for the college to purchase an electronic "scanner" which could read printed information from previous proposals, and input this information into a computer to be used in writing future proposals. Several faculty members said that they have been able to obtain boilerplate information from other faculty members who have had a lot of experience working with grants, and who therefore have this information accessible. On the other hand, several faculty members with considerable grant writing experience stated that they do not use templates, but rather start from scratch with each new proposal except in the case of resubmissions.

A number of faculty members in the Special Education Department stated they have their proposals typed by their secretaries, although several others stated they preferred to type the proposals themselves. Most of the special education faculty have computers in their offices, or are able to utilize computers available in the departmental office. According to one special education faculty member, "Special ed has learned how to do things in such a way as to get computers, equipment, etc." Some of this equipment has been purchased with money from external funding sources.

Since most of the faculty in the Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Leadership and Foundations Departments do not have private offices, they tend to have their computers at home rather than in their offices. Several faculty members voiced this problem with the physical structure of the office complex. Not surprisingly, most of the faculty in these departments who have written grant proposals said they do all their own document preparation. At least one faculty member reported that because he does not type, he generally writes out his proposals by hand and then hires clerical help to prepare the final document.

The faculty in the Health and Human Performance Department do have private offices, and many have computers available in their offices which they use to do their own proposal preparation. Others prefer to use their computers at home or have their document prepared by a secretary.

Of those faculty members (across departments) who use word

processing software, most said they use IBM and compatible computers, with WordPerfect software cited as the word processing package most frequently used. Other word processing packages used by faculty members in writing proposals included Word Star and various packages compatible with Apple computers including Apple Works and Micro Soft Word. Approximately one-third of the interviewees said that additional clerical help would enhance the proposal-writing process, with one faculty member calling for the inclusion of a "grants typist" on the college clerical staff.

Other Concerns

The issue of interdepartmental communication and competition was mentioned by four interviewees. These persons felt that there was not enough knowledge about grant activity in other departments and within their own department.

As a whole, faculty members did not express a lot of enthusiasm for the idea of developing a library of grants resources in the college office. One veteran faculty member said that although this was a good suggestion, it was at best "a feeble beginning" to addressing the larger issue of grants procurement. Of those who did support the idea, suggested resources to be included in such a library were copies of successfully funded proposals, a listing of non-profit foundational funding sources, procedural information such as a "how-to" book for beginners, and boilerplate information. One faculty member was very resistent to the idea of having previous grant proposals on file, stating that proposals are the property

of the PI, and that therefore no one should have access to them until funding is obtained and the proposed project is activated.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation was to assess education faculty members' perceptions of various problems and concerns related to the process of grant writing and implementation. Selected college of education faculty members (n = 15) from a large public university comprised the sample. Data were collected during faculty interviews, using an interview protocol consisting of twelve open-ended items. According to information gained from faculty during the interviews, the greatest problem relative to the grant process is the lack of availability of information about funding sources. Other problems frequently cited by interviewees included lack of time, absence of a system of rewards for those who pursue grants, lack of technical assistance, and lack of administrative support. In general, these problems were typical of problems mentioned frequently in the literature regarding barriers to faculty involvement in the grantsmanship process.

Specific recommendations for improvement suggested by the faculty interviewees include the college's establishment of a clearly defined reward system for those involved in grant activity, hiring of additional faculty to give faculty members more release time to pursue grants, development of organized political and administrative support for those participating in the grant writing and implementation processes, improvements in

current budgetary management procedures, and establishment of a system for offering assistance to faculty members who are unfamiliar with the technical aspects of the grant writing process.

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Table 1
Percentage of Faculty Members Participating in Each Phase of the Study by Department

Data Collection Phase	Dept.	% of Faculty Responding
Initial Questionnaire	C&I[1]	60
	ELF[2]	40
	SPED[3]	70
	HHP[4]	43
Follow-up Interview	C&I	27
	ELF	20
	SPED	50
	EDHP	29
Both Phases	C&I	67
	ELF	47
	SPED	90
	HHP	50

[1] Curriculum and Instruction
[2] Educational Leadership and Foundations
[3] Special Education
[4] Health and Human Performance

Appendix A
Items Appearing on Initial Questionnaire*

1. Have you applied for any out-of university funding for research or project development during the past five years (yes or no)? If yes, how many funding applications/grant proposals have you prepared in that period of time? How many were successful? What was the range of individual funding rewards and the total funding reward? To what agencies/institutions did you apply (federal, state/block, foundation, corporate, other)? What was the source of your information regarding possible funding? What types of projects did this funding involve (research, program, personnel training, consortium, other)?

2. What research areas of development projects are of particular interest to you (if any)?

3. Are there any particular constraints which may be inhibiting your participation in such projects (time, lack of information, lack of interest, lack of incentives, lack of technical assistance in preparing proposal, lack of technical assistance in developing concept, other)?

4. Do you routinely receive grant information from any source (yes or no)? If yes, please specify.

5. In developing a process for grantsmanship, which of the following do you feel is (are) most critically needed (information of funding sources, assistance with concept development, assistance with preparing proposal, assistance with implementation of project, inservice training, other)?

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*Most items were in "checklist" format. Alternatives appearing in parentheses after the items served as checklist choices.

Appendix B
Items Appearing on Interview Protocol*

1. TIME. You indicated that time was a constraint to your grants activity. What do you mean by "time" (time in terms of: personal schedule, preparing proposals, project implementation, other)? What kinds of things would help alleviate this problem?

2. INFORMATION. What kind of information are you in need of (funding sources, procedural information, contacts, other)?

3. INCENTIVES. What kind of incentives do you think would help faculty members become more interested in grantsmanship (released time, monetary, other)?

4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. What kinds of technical assistance do you feel is needed (assistance with: project design, project implementation, evaluation, "boiler plate" information, budgetary matters, physical preparation of documents)?

5. Would a library of resources located in the college be helpful to you? What would you like to see included in such a library? What kinds of resources, publications, etc. would you like to have available regarding grant opportunities?

6. What do you think we could do as a college to increase faculty involvement in grantsmanship?

7. Have you ever served on a grants review committee or other committee involved in the support of grantsmanship?

8. What do you think are the greatest obstacles for faculty involvement in grantsmanship? What are your greatest frustrations/concerns?

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*Some of the items were in "checklist" format. Alternatives appearing in parentheses after the items served as checklist choices.